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C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 000018

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/04/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [BO](#) [FI](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: FINNS SUPPORT JOINT STATEMENT TO BELARUS; WILL
APPROACH RUSSIA

REF: A. 05 STATE 208887

[1](#)B. 05 STATE 232583

[1](#)C. 05 HELSINKI 1146

Classified By: PolChief Gregory Thome, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Following up on reftels, PolChief called on MFA Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia Matti Turunen to discuss Belarus. The GOF views a joint US-EU demarche to Lukashenko in advance of the March election as imperative, Turunen said. Finland, for its part, would welcome a very strongly worded demarche demanding widespread democratic reforms and an early invitation to OSCE/OHDIR observers. Finland also would not oppose a tough message to Lukashenko demanding he not run. However, Turunen cautioned, flexibility on this point is key and the US and the EU cannot afford to deadlock over language, because a joint demarche showing US-EU solidarity will send a stronger message and prove more effective in the long run than will the demand that he not run, which he will simply ignore. In any case, Turunen concluded, Finland supports fully the concept of a joint demarche and expects that consensus on language can be reached, perhaps during the political directors' meeting next week.

[1](#)2. (C) Turunen noted that convincing Russia to become involved in a dialogue with Belarus would also be helpful. He admitted that getting Russia to agree to a strong demarche similar to what the US and EU hope to deliver amounted to "wishful thinking." However, he said that the GOF, now an EU Troika member, would encourage EU-Russian discussions aimed at encouraging reform in Belarus.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: Over the past several months, Finland has attempted bilaterally to open working level discussions with Belarus on "safe" issues of shared concern -- including Baltic Sea and other environmental cooperation, nuclear safety, and accreditation of non-resident diplomats -- but has been rebuffed on all fronts. Nevertheless, we are pleased to see that the GOF is making more pro-active efforts to address problems in Belarus, and particularly that it is now seeking to engage Moscow. End Comment.
HYATT